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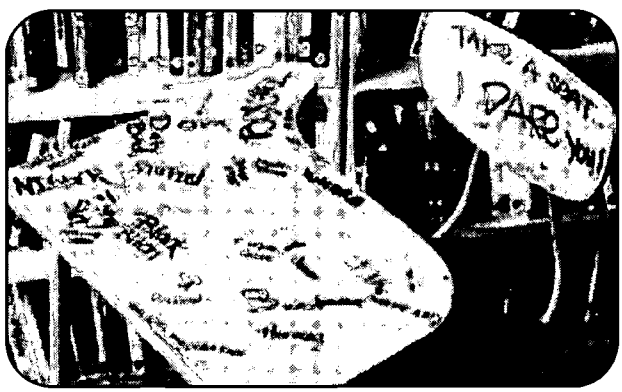
ABSTRACT

This manual provides information on fighting verbal harassment on the school campus. Chapter 1, "Background," discusses the history and power analysis of vebal abuse and offers statistics about slurs and harassment (the widespread use of slurs, the damaging effect of slurs on people who are targeted by them, and how infrequently efforts are made to stop the use of slurs). Chapter 2, "Campaign Strategies," provides various anti-slur campaign strategies, focusing on research and evaluation, responding to slurs, peer education, teacher education, visual activism, and anti-slur policies. Chapter 3, "Implementing Your Campaign," focuses on developing a strategy, getting approval from the school administrators, coalition building, and developing a timeline. Sample materials are included (student survey, peer education workshop agenda, peer education workshop handout, teacher training agenda, teacher training handout, and California school nondiscrimination law). (SM)

TAKE IT BACK:
A Manual for Fighting Slurs on Campus



A publication of GAY-STRAIGHT ALLIANCE NETWORK

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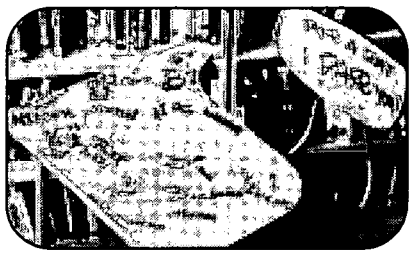
INTRODUCTION



Look around your school. There are countless differences among the people you see - differences in race, ethnicity, gender, cultural heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation, economic class, age, physical and mental ability, and many others.

Instead of being embraced as expressions of diversity, these differences are often singled out for ridicule. Name-calling, labeling, harassing remarks, and slurs such as "You faggot!" "Spic" and "You're retarded!" send clear messages to their targets that they are not welcome or "not as good" as others, and contribute generally to a hostile school environment for everyone.

Words DO have the power to hurt us!

Slurs hurt, isolate, and fragment communities, leaving people feeling left out and targetted. Recognizing the power of language to affect individuals and environments is foundational to the work of creating safe space for all students at school.

Through student organizing and activism, you can work to prevent slurs and respond effectively when they happen; you can focus on the source, meaning, and impact of slurs in order to take back hurtful language in your school.

By speaking out against slurs on your campus, you can also take back the ability of language to empower and strengthen our communities.

By offering you *Take It Back: A Manual for Fighting Slurs on Campus*, Gay-Straight Alliance Network invites you to be a partner in taking on the use of slurs in schools because:

- slurs contribute to a hostile environment and can lead to students feeling unsafe at school.
- the use of all kinds of slurs has become so widespread that we risk becoming desensitized to their power and meaning.
- the use of homophobic slurs is prevalent on school campuses and impacts all students regardless of actual or perceived sexual orientation.
- addressing slurs on school campuses is part of a larger campaign to implement California's nondiscrimination law, and is an ongoing priority for organizations such as Gay-Straight Alliance Network and youth activists across the state.

One important tool available to you in your ongoing work to stop slurs is the California Student Safety and Violence Prevention Act of 2000 (also known as AB 537). This law added actual or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity to California's school nondiscrimination policy (CA Education Code section 220), which already included sex, ethnic group identification, race, ancestry, national origin, religion, color, or mental or physical disability. This means your school has an obligation to protect students from all kinds of harassment including slurs and other forms of verbal harassment.

The material contained in the pages of *Take It Back* will help you design a campaign at your school to reduce slurs and raise awareness about how to choose language that promotes a respectful environment. This manual will provide you with the tools and resources you need to develop and implement your campaign, including guidelines for working with your administration, a section on the history of slurs, and an analysis of the power dynamics that inform them. You will find statistics that can help you build your case for why this campaign is needed, and campaign ideas like peer and teacher education. There is also a section devoted to strengthening your campaign through visual activism. You will find ways to respond to slurs on an individual level and suggestions about broadening your campaign through coalition building.

As you consider the form your anti-slur activism will take, be careful not to fragment your campaign by focusing only on homophobic slurs. Remember that whenever any group of people is targeted by slurs, prejudice is reinforced and a system of oppression is maintained. Additionally, different kinds of derogatory terms are often used at the same time, making it difficult to separate and prioritize among slurs.

In the words of Audre Lorde, a famous black lesbian author and activist:

> "From my membership in all of these groups, I have learned that oppression and intolerance of difference come in all shapes and sizes and colors and sexualities and genders, and that for those of us who share the goals of liberation and a workable future, there can be no hierarchies of oppression."
> ("There Is No Hierarchy of Oppressions," Interracial Books for Children Bulletin Vol.XIV, Number 3, 1983.)

Stopping the use of slurs at your school is a goal worthy of as much energy as you can give it. Your dedicated work in whatever form it takes, will leave its mark on your school. By using this manual as an organizing tool, and through your leadership and the participation of others that you mobilize, you will help your peers, teachers, and administrators to think critically about the power of language, implement the California Student Safety and Violence Prevention Act of 2000, and create a safer, more respectful school for all.

Good luck!

CHAPTER 1:
BACKGROUND

SLURS: HISTORY and POWER ANALYSIS

Knowing the background, power dynamics, and effect of hate language is an important step toward developing a successful anti-slur campaign. The material in this section of *Take It Back* will help your Gay-Straight Alliance or other student group become familiar with how slurs fit into a larger system of oppression and power, as well as the specific history and meaning of some commonly used derogatory terms.

Language and Power

What comes to mind when you think of power? Most people think of concepts like money, resources, control, and access. Using these ideas, power can be simply defined as *control over people and circumstances*.

In our society, certain groups of people can be identified as having power over others, and some groups have privileges at the expense of people in another group.

Systems of power, such as racism, sexism, heterosexism/homophobia, ageism, and ableism, all work to keep these power relationships in place. Derogatory language is one of the primary ways that certain groups maintain power over others. In other words, *slurs are tools of oppression*. Furthermore, using slurs keeps others down and prevents people from joining together to fight all kinds of oppression. An analysis of how slurs operate as part of larger systems of power is important because it helps explain the broad meaning and impact of hate language.

Check out the power chart below for a diagram of power relationships.

Power Chart

POWER	NON-POWER
Adults	Young/Elderly People
White People	People of Color
Men	Women/Intersex People
Gender-Conforming People	Gender-Nonconforming/ Transgender People
Rich/Middle Class People	Poor/Working Class People
People Born in the U.S.	Recent Immigrants
Christians	Non-Christians
Heterosexuals	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Queer, Questioning (LGBQQ) People
Able-Bodied People	People With Disabilities (mental, physical, and/or hidden)

Developed by Intergroup Clearinghouse, 2001

History and Meaning of Slurs

Below, you'll find a list of some common slurs heard in schools and communities today. This is not meant to be a comprehensive list of slurs, but is instead intended to provide examples of where some common slurs come from and what they mean. We also encourage you to do your own research about the histories and meanings of other slurs that you hear in your school.

Additionally, we recognize that many words with a history of being used as slurs have been reclaimed by targeted communities. An example of this is the word "queer," which was historically and is still often used as a derogatory term against gays and lesbians, and is now is used by some LGBTQI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, intersex) people to express their identity and reclaim the power of the word. Slurs used by oppressed individuals or groups to refer to themselves and their communities are seen as empowering by some and as offensive by others. It is important, however, to respect each individual's right to choose their own identity and labels, and to recognize the difference between language used to target a group of people and language used within a group.

As you read about the background of the slurs in this list, think about how these examples of derogatory language fit into institutional systems of oppression such as racism, heterosexism/homophobia, and anti-immigrant sentiment (which is sometimes called xenophobia.) How have slurs been used historically to keep dominant groups in power and weaken targeted groups? What are the histories of other slurs, and how can these also be analyzed as agents of institutional power?

Bitch
The literal definition of this word is "female dog." However, it is most commonly used against women who are thought to be aggressive, overbearing, spiteful, or opinionated. It is also used against men who are seen as weak, or against someone who is subservient to another person. Sometimes, the word "bitches" is used to refer to women in general.

Faggot
This slur, used most often against men who are gay or perceived to be gay, originates from an old word for a bundle of sticks. These "faggot-bundles" were used as fuel for fires, and during the European Inquisitions they were sometimes used to light the fires under people burned at the stake for opposition to the Catholic Church. The term later became a sexist and homophobic slur used against people who were marginalized in society, such as gays and elderly women. The word "faggot" was first used in the U.S. in the early 20th century, and was applied to men who were seen as gay or effeminate.[1]

FOB
This slur stands for "fresh off the boat" or "fresh over the border" and is meant to put down recent immigrants to the United States, especially people from Asia, Cuba, Haiti, and Mexico. The term was first used in the 1970s by U.S.-born Asian Americans who wanted to distance themselves from more culturally marginalized recent immigrants.[2]

Ghetto
This is a term used derogatorily to refer to things that are thought to be cheap, run-down, out-of-date, or generally undesirable. "Ghetto" often implies association with working class communities of color, and carries with it the assumption that people who live in these areas are bad or inferior. The word is defined by the American Heritage Dictionary as "a section of a city occupied by a minority group who live there especially because of social, economic, or legal pressure," and it originates from World War II, when Jews in many European cities were forced to live in separate areas.[3]

Nigger
This word, used most commonly against Blacks and African-Americans, has a particularly charged history. It comes from the Latin word "niger," which means black.[4]

Retarded
This slur is based on the medical diagnosis of "mentally retarded," applied to some people who have developmental disabilities. It is widely used in a negative way to refer to people or things that are perceived to be stupid, annoying, or uncool, which in turn implies that people with mental retardation are bad or inferior. The term "retarded" or "retard" is also often misused against people with physical disabilities, the majority of whom do not suffer from mental retardation.[5]

Towel-Head / Rag-Head / Diaper-Head
These slurs are used against people of Middle-Eastern descent, as well as others perceived to be Muslim or Arab. The slurs reference and poke fun at the turbans worn by some Muslim men. Additionally, these slurs are often used against individuals from the Sikh faith, who practice a religion founded in India in the 15th Century. (Most Sikh men wear turbans and long beards, and are often mistakenly identified as Middle Eastern or Muslim.) Use of slurs against people perceived to be Muslim or Arab has increased significantly in the U.S. since the September 11th attacks on New York City and Washington, D.C., and such terms are often used to imply an association with terrorism.[6]

Sources

Note: This is a list of sources consulted for the information in this section. You can also do your own research to come up with more information about slurs used in your school.

[1] "Lesson Plan: What do 'faggot' and 'dyke' mean?" GLSEN Resource center. October 2001. http://www.glsen.org/templates/resources/record.html?section=16&record=1049.

[2] Gondo, Maxie. "Parsing Asian America." Asian American Demographics. 2001. http://goldsea.com/AAD/Parsing/parsing.html.

[3] The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language. Fourth Edition, 2000. Houghton Mifflin Company.

[4] Burchett, Michael. The Origins of American Racial and Ethnic Slurs." Notes on the 20th Century Issue #10. September 2000. http://www.terraplanepub.com/century10.htm.

[5] Osterhaus, Tyler. "The Day I was Called A Retard." Oshkosh Support Group Down Syndrome Families. http://www.oshkoshsupportgroup.homestead.com/thoughts2.html.

[6] Swanson, Stevenson. "Anti-Muslim crimes peaked after 9/11." Chicago Tribune. 14 November 2002.

STATISTICS ABOUT SLURS and HARASSMENT

It may take some work to convince your peers, teachers, and administrators that their participation is needed for your anti-slur campaign to have its greatest impact. Potential supporters may be reluctant to join your campaign because they don't realize how widely slurs are used. They may not realize how hurtful slurs can be, or they may not think anything can really be done to stop the use of slurs. Statistics can be helpful tools in responding to their concerns.

Here are some statistics you can use to demonstrate:

1. the widespread use of slurs
2. the damaging effect slurs can have on people who are targeted by them
3. how infrequently efforts are made to stop the use of slurs

You can also develop your own collection of statistics based on information you gather from within your school. See pages 18-22 for more on how to design and carry out your own survey. Use your specific findings, combined with these broader statistics to build your rationale for why an effort to reduce slurs in your school is important.

1. The Use of Slurs is Widespread

Nationally, 93% of teens hear other kids at school or in their neighborhood use words like "fag," "homo," "dyke," "queer," or "gay" at least once in a while, with 51% hearing them everyday.

Source: National Mental Health Association "What Does Gay Mean?" Teen Survey, 2002

63.4% of high school students reported hearing racial slurs from other students in the last 30 days.

Source: Safe School Survey, Fremont Unified School District, 2001

67.2% of high school students and 67.7% of junior high school students reported hearing slurs based on physical size from other students in the last 30 days.

Source: Safe School Survey, Fremont Unified School District, 2001

43% of students have been the target of "offensive racial comments" or attacks at school or on their way to or from school.

Source: Seattle Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 1995

53% of youth hear anti-gay slurs as many as 10 times or more every day at school.

Source: California Gay-Straight Alliance School Climate Survey, 1999

80% of the youth who have been targeted with anti-gay harassment identify as heterosexual.

Source: Seattle Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 1995

2. Slurs Contribute to an Unsafe School Climate

1 in 5 high school students reported that they have missed school because of the fear of being bullied, harassed, or in a fight.

Source: Woodland Community Oriented Policing Services Grant Committee, 2001

25% of LGBT students said that they had recently missed school out of fear for their safety.

Source: Pediatrics 1998; 101:895-902, "The Association Between Health Risk Behaviors and Sexual Orientation Among a School-Based Sample of Adolescents," Garofolo

68% of gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth reported feeling unsafe in their school because of their sexual orientation, and 90% of transgender students reported feeling unsafe based on their gender expression.

Source: GLSEN's 2001 National School Climate Survey: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual And Transgender Students And Their Experiences In School

3. Slurs often Go Unaddressed

Only 25% of students report that teachers intervene to stop verbal or physical harassment of any kind, whereas 71% of teachers believe they always intervene.

Source: No Bullying Program: Preventing Bully/Victim Violence At School, Lajoie, et al., 1997, p. xi

84% of students report rarely or never hearing school staff members intervene when anti-gay comments are made.

Source: California Gay-Straight Alliance School Climate Survey, 1999

CHAPTER 2: CAMPAIGN STRATEGIES

OVERVIEW

In this chapter of *Take It Back*, we discuss a number of anti-slur campaign strategies that your GSA or coalition can implement, including peer education, teacher education, visual activism, and anti-slur policies. Many of the strategies presented here will require administrative approval, and at the end of the chapter you will find a list of tips for working with administrators to get your plans approved. We also include ideas that you can work on without first going through your administration – look for these in the "No Approval Required!" sidebars. In the section titled "Responding to Slurs," we present some ideas for what to do and say when you hear slurs actually taking place, and we give pointers for how to react if someone calls you out on your own use of slurs.

Running a successful activism campaign requires strategic thinking and careful planning. When considering which strategy or strategies to use in your anti-slur campaign, keep in mind what would work best in your school environment and would be most feasible given the resources of your GSA or coalition. It is also a good idea to incorporate a research phase into your campaign, so you can more fully understand the problem of slurs at your school and be better prepared to address it effectively.

As you read through the campaign strategy descriptions in this chapter, think about the pros and cons of each strategy and be open to how the results of your research might influence which strategy you choose. For example, at first many of your GSA or coalition members may want to conduct a teacher training on how to intervene when slurs are used. However, after researching the issue you may find that most slurs are said in the hallways and locker rooms when teachers aren't around. In this case, peer education may be more effective in addressing the root of the problem.

In Chapter 3, Implementing Your Campaign, we discuss how to identify your group's resources, allies, and opponents, and we give you tools for planning your campaign timeline. Planning your campaign in this way will help you develop the most effective plan for implementing your anti-slur campaign.

RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

Every well-planned campaign begins with research – it is important to find out what people in your school community think about the problem (in this case, slurs). A student survey is a great way to gather information that you can use to plan a campaign or convince your administration and community that slurs are a problem at your school. See a sample student survey on page 51.

No Approval Required!

There are many other ways to gather information about slurs at your school. You can use the information you collect to find out which strategies will work best at your school; to educate others through the school newspaper, posters, or daily announcements; and to help convince your administration that there is a problem with slurs at your school.

1. **Tally Slurs.**
   Have each of your GSA members tally the number of times in a day they hear slurs. You may consider having people track where slurs occur: to/from school, classrooms, hallways, locker rooms, after school activities, etc.

2. **Keep Journals.**
   Ask GSA members to keep a journal of incidents where they witness or experience slurs and what happens.

3. **Collect Stories.**
   Ask GSA members and others to write down their personal experiences being targeted by slurs and put them together. Keep student's identities anonymous so that they will feel more comfortable sharing their experiences.

4. **Distribute Student Surveys Outside of Class.**
   Pass out surveys during lunch or across the street from the school before or after school in exchange for a lollypop or other candy. Have an open GSA meeting where you have snacks and people fill out the survey, or visit other club meetings and ask them to fill out the survey.

Conducting a Student Survey

1. Make a plan.
Come up with a clear plan as a group before beginning your survey project. Think about what you might want to do with the results when you are done, strategize about how you will administer the surveys, and decide who will work on each part of the survey project. Doing a survey can be a big job - be sure to use the strategy and timeline planning worksheets on pages 37-41 and 45-47.

2. Collect data.
Distribute your survey and gather responses in a way that gives you enough information to draw reasonable conclusions about your school climate. Some groups distribute surveys through classes, while others hand out surveys outside of class. See below for more discussion of different distribution methods.

Classroom distribution:

One of the best ways to get a diverse sample of the student body is to pass out the survey in classes by department or grade. Ask one or more teachers to distribute the survey in their classes. You may want write a letter to give to teachers about why the project is important and urging them to help out by taking 10 minutes out of a class period to pass out the survey. If you think that it would be possible and helpful to get your principal to approve your survey, see "Getting Approval from Your Administration" on page 42 for tips on gaining approval from your administration.

Other distribution methods:

If you aren't able to get the survey passed out during class, don't give up! There are lots of different ways to distribute a survey. Try to pass out the survey to a diverse sample of your student body. Be aware of how you are distributing the surveys, who is filling it out, and how that may be affecting your results. Try using one or more of these tactics to distribute the survey:

- Pass out the survey during lunch, breaks, or school activities.
- Advertise and invite students to an open GSA meeting with snacks to fill out your survey and learn about your GSA or coalition. If you don't have the money to buy snacks, write a letter to a local restaurant or market asking for food donations.
- Stand across the street from your school before school starts or after school ends and ask students to fill out the survey in exchange for a lollypop or other candy.
- Ask the members of other clubs to fill out the survey. Talk to other club advisors or the presidents of other clubs and ask for 10 minutes during their next meeting to distribute the survey. You could also make a presentation to these clubs about your GSA or coalition and ask them to make a presentation about their club at your next meeting.

Tips for conducting a survey:

Be consistent.
Try to use the same method for distributing and collecting all of the surveys. If you are going to pass out the surveys in class, you should try to pass out all of the surveys in classes. Your results will be more credible if you are consistent throughout the process.

Collect as many surveys as possible.
The more surveys you have, the more accurate and compelling your results will be. If you are going to pass out surveys at lunch or after school, consider doing it every day for a week in order to get enough surveys for you to draw meaningful conclusions.

Keep the individual survey results confidential.
People are more likely to give their honest opinions if they know that it is anonymous and confidential. Collect the surveys in a way that protects the identities of the people filling them out. It might be a good idea to have one person collect the surveys and a different person tally them to ensure confidentiality.

Divide up the work and make deadlines.
Pick one or two people to be in charge of the project. If you have enough people, assign different people to different tasks. You could have one small group assigned to get the survey approved, another to distribute the survey, another to tally the results, and another to work on the report. When you are assigning different jobs, make sure you come up with a realistic timeline for all of them.

3. Analyze your data.
Have members of your GSA or coalition tally the numbers of responses to each particular question. Count how many surveys you collected, and count how many people marked each answer to each question. Example: If you collected 150 surveys and 60 people said they heard slurs about race directed at people, then that is 40% of the responses. In documenting your data analysis, you would then write, "40% of students surveyed reported hearing slurs about race directed at people." If some surveys are incomplete (example: only the top part of the survey is filled out), you may consider not counting these surveys. Also, you may want to take out surveys where the person obviously did not take it seriously (example: they checked off always, often, sometimes, occasionally, and never in the same question).

4. Write a Report.
Making a report of your survey findings is a great way to organize your results so that your GSA or coalition (and future members!) can clearly see what your survey project revealed about your school climate. The results of your survey project should help guide your decisions about the strategies you choose to combat slurs in your school. Below is a sample outline for your report.

Report outline:

I. **Title**
Create a title for your report that conveys the purpose of the survey and catches the attention of those you'll be showing it to – administration, school board, media, etc.

II. **Background**
It is important to place your evaluation in the broader context of research that has already been done and compare your school to other schools that have been evaluated. See pages 12-13 for statistics about slurs and harassment in school.

III. **Method**
Be sure to say who sponsored the survey, when and how you conducted the survey, and how many people answered the survey.

IV. **Findings**
Write down how many surveys you collected. Print each survey question and the percentage of each response. Also include a summary of the relevant comments that students wrote in. Making graphs, tables, or charts is a great way to visually represent your results.

V. **Conclusions**
Write your conclusions about what the survey findings say about slurs at your school. When making generalizations, be sure to talk about the limitations of your evaluation. Be honest (ex: only a small percentage of the student body was surveyed). Also include anything you would change about the way you did the survey so that if your GSA or coalition decides to do another survey in the future, they can learn from your method. You should also talk about how your findings compare to other research you wrote about in the background section of this report.

VI. **Attachments**
Attach a copy of the actual survey and any other materials you used, such as a letter to teachers asking them to pass out the survey and the information you gave to your principal.

5. Write an Executive Summary of Your Report.
Making a short summary, also called an "executive summary," of the results of your survey can be a great way to present key findings to your administration, school board, or your school paper, or other media. A one page summary does not provide all of the background on your method and the results of every question but rather presents the key findings and the important conclusions.

Tips and suggestions for an effective executive summary:

- Provide highlights from your statistics and analysis of the findings.
- Be sure to include a brief background and summary of what methods you used to conduct the survey.
- It is sometimes more powerful to present your results as a ratio rather than as a percentage (ex: 3 out of 4 students hear slurs directed toward students, teachers, or staff).
- Talk about how harassment and slurs are a problem if even one student is harassed. If the numbers of people who are harassed is small, point out that while your school may be doing a better job than others, additional steps are needed to make everyone feel safe.

6. Take Action! Use your findings to make change.

A. Present your results to your administration.
Use the results of your survey to convince your administration to approve teacher trainings, classroom presentations, or other education about slurs and harassment at your school. When your GSA or coalition asks your administration or school board to approve other activities or programs, show them the results of your evaluation to convince them that your efforts are needed.

B. Write a resolution for your school board.
A resolution is a document that explains your problem, the process that has been followed so far to change it, and what you want to happen for the problem to be resolved. A resolution would be a document signed by your school board as a formal recognition of the problem and an agreement to take steps to resolve the problem.

C. Do a media campaign.
Ask your school paper, community papers, and/or local radio stations to run a story about your survey project and results. Be specific! Don't assume the press knows what you are talking about. Be sure they spell out the name of your club (example: GSA = Gay-Straight Alliance).

Have your GSA or student coalition write a press release. Highlight important findings from your survey and talk about what your school is doing or not doing to implement the California law that prohibits harassment, including slurs, in school.

Disclaimer: Make sure you take into account the possibility and risks of generating negative press and attracting the attention of opposition.

D. Use your results to gather parent/community support.
Parent allies can be very valuable to your anti-slur campaign, especially when you're trying to gain administrative approval for your activities. Try to build parent support by presenting the results of your survey to the PTA and asking them to endorse your campaign. You can also gain allies by presenting your research and your anti-slur campaign plans to supportive organizations and/or congregations in your community.

E. Use your results to do activism beyond your school.
Present your findings to your school board to ask them to make changes to affect all the schools in your district or send your results to your County Office of Education or the California Department of Education and ask them to fund programs at your school to combat slurs and other hate-motivated behavior.

RESPONDING TO SLURS

You and members of your GSA or student coalition can work to take back slurs as individuals by confronting slurs when you hear them. Have a GSA meeting and present the information below on responding to slurs. You may also want to work with the conflict resolution program or peer counseling program at your school to develop a training for your GSA or coalition members on how to step in when slurs are used.

Here are some helpful steps to use when challenging someone who says or does something that offends you. Discuss and practice these actions at a club meeting, and agree to address slurs when you hear each other using them or other students using them. You can also meet with individual supportive teachers and ask them to address slurs in this way.

We were all raised in an oppressive society and we all have learned stereotypes. Using slurs doesn't make you a terrible person, but challenging yourself and others to stop using slurs makes real, positive change. Work within your GSA or coalition to help each other reduce the slurs you and others use.

When you hear a slur:

1. Breathe.
2. State what you heard.
3. Talk about how it made you feel. You don't have to be a member of the group attacked by the slur to be offended.
4. Give a recommendation for action. For example, ask them not to use that word or phrase again.

When someone challenges you:

1. Breathe.
2. Check your pride. Try not to be defensive.
3. Use active listening. When someone is talking about how something you said made them feel, don't interrupt them.
4. Thank them for respecting you enough to be truthful with you.
5. Think, then take appropriate action. Appropriate action may be nothing other than trying to take that word or phrase out of your language. It may also be apologizing or taking a stronger action.
6. Thank them again later. This is a hard step to take, but it can be important for relationship and ally building. Thanking someone later for challenging you shows them you are interested in changing your own behavior on a deep level.

This material was adapted from Changework.

PEER EDUCATION

Educating your peers about harassment and name-calling is one of the most effective ways to make your school safer for everyone. It can be very helpful to form a coalition with other clubs at your school to educate your peers about harassment and all types of oppression.

No Approval Required!

Hold a teach-in after school
Plan a teach-in off-campus at a local church, community center, youth space, or with other organization that is supportive of your efforts to combat hate language. You can also plan a teach-in during one of your GSA meetings and invite other clubs or students to attend. Join with other clubs to plan and carry out the training. See page 52 for a sample agenda.

Practice guerrilla theater
Stage an incident where one of your members uses a slur and other members confront them. At the end, explain your purpose and why you think slurs are hurtful. Practice ahead of time and decide where and when you will act it out. Try to get a teacher to agree to let you do it in their class. Keep in mind that it is possible that you may get in trouble for using slurs even though you are acting. Discuss the risks as a group.

Ahead of Time

1. Do your research.
First of all, you should review the Slurs: History and Power Analysis section in this manual (see pages 9-11). Next, if you can, talk to local groups that do peer education or other student trainings. Contact other GSAs in your area to find out if they have sponsored peer education in the past or if they are interested in working with your GSA or coalition. You can also contact GSA Network for help planning your training or for contact information for GSAs in your community.

2. Figure out what your school will allow you to do.
Talk to your advisor and meet with administrators and/or other faculty members. Present them with a potential workshop agenda and be able to tell them why you think this is an important thing to do. You may also want to present your school survey results or other statistics on pages 12-13.

3. Get Approval.
Set up a meeting with your principal to ask for approval. Present your project and why it's important. See page 27 for a sample agenda for a meeting with your principal. If it turns out that you need to get approval from your school board, call them to get on the school board meeting agenda and plan your presentation. See page 28 for more information about getting approval from your school board.

4. Find a teacher.
Find a teacher who is supportive and who thinks their class would be receptive to your presentation. This may be a teacher who attends club meetings or one you know is supportive in other ways. Often, health teachers and social studies teachers are interested in having this topic discussed in their class. Talk with them about how they can support you and discuss how they will handle any disruptions that might occur.

5. Practice!
Practice the entire workshop with an "audience" of club members or other supporters.

In the Classroom

1. Draw connections.
Try to draw connections between your workshop and what the teacher is teaching.

2. Invite an administrator or another teacher to observe.
Invite a supportive administrator to see your workshop if you plan on presenting it to other classes. Also, other teachers might like to see what you propose doing in their classes, so feel free to invite them.

3. Be prepared for disagreement.
The entire reason you are doing this workshop is to increase awareness. People may disagree with you, and that's okay as long as they are not disruptive to the workshop. Be accepting of others' beliefs.

4. Stick to your purpose.
You are there to do an anti-bias workshop. Avoid getting into any moral or religious discussions about sexuality or debates about the validity of non-Christian religions such as Islam.

5. Be honest.
Above all else be honest about what you know. If you don't know an answer, that's okay, tell the audience that you don't know. If possible, you might offer to look up information and get back to the class about questions you don't have answers to.

Afterwards

1. Learn from your evaluations.
Make sure you give folks enough time to fill out an evaluation, and be open to constructive criticism. Don't let the overly negative ones get you down, though.

2. Follow up.
Check in with the teacher(s) of the class(es) where you conducted your peer education and find out whether your presentation sparked any discussion or changes. If you invited an administrator or other guest to attend, schedule a time to talk with them about what they thought of your workshop.

TEACHER EDUCATION

Teachers play a crucial role in our learning environment and can be valuable allies in our fight against hate. Trainings can ensure that teachers are educated on diversity issues, are familiar with school laws and policies, and obtain the skills necessary to intervene when they hear hateful speech. Below are some steps that may be helpful in getting a teacher training for your school or for the schools in your district. This section will focus on how your GSA or coalition can do the training. See page 54 for a sample teacher training agenda.

No Approval Required!

1. Cultivate and nurture teacher allies.
Meet individually with teachers who are supportive. Talk to them about how they deal with slurs when they hear them, asking them to commit to consistently intervening when they hear hate speech. Ask them to talk to other teachers who may be supportive and request that they do the same.

2. Conduct an off-campus voluntary teacher training.
Hold a training for teachers after school or on a weekend. Organize a panel of students to talk about their experiences with slurs and harassment. Present information about how schools have a legal obligation to protect everyone from harassment. After the panel, discuss how important it is for teachers to respond to slurs when they hear them. See page 54 for a sample agenda for a teacher training. Steps to take:

A. Decide whether your training will be led by GSA (or coalition) members or if you will ask a community group to lead the training.

B. Find a group who will donate space to hold your training (like a community center or supportive church) and confirm a date and time.

C. Contact other student groups in your area and let them know about the training.

D. Have all groups advertise the training on their individual campuses. Put messages in teacher's mailboxes and speak with teachers individually to get them to commit to attending.

Training Teachers at Your School

1. Schedule a meeting.
Set up a meeting with your principal or other administrator who deals with club activites to make your case for the need to conduct a teacher training. If you are trying to get a mandatory teacher training, you may need to get approval from your school board (see page 28).

2. Conduct your meeting.
Decide who will go to the meeting with your principal. You may want to send a couple of the GSA or coalition leaders rather than just one, but be careful not to bring too many people because that can be overwhelming for your principal. See below for a sample meeting agenda.

Meeting Agenda:

I. Introductions

II. Go over why you're having the meeting. Present your rationale for why anti-slur education is necessary and how a teacher training on diversity issues would contribute to your goal of eradicating slurs on campus. Mention how California law makes it illegal for students to be harassed or discriminated against on the basis of sex, ethnic group identification, race, national origin, religion, color, mental or physical disability, sexual orientation or gender identity. Having a teacher training will ensure that the school is implementing the law and educating its teachers on how to implement the law as well.

III. Share individual student's stories. Have people verbally share their experiences or you can have them written down. If they are written, make sure to take the time to read one or two aloud.

IV. Present your research. You can use the statistics provided in the beginning of this manual (see pages 12-13) or findings from your own school survey (see pages 18-22) to help make your argument for a teacher training. You may also consider presenting a petition signed by students at your school.

V. Ask for a teacher training. At this point you may want to show your principal a sample agenda of what the training might look like.

VI. Negotiate a deal. Your principal or other administrator might say no to a teacher training because he/she might want outside facilitators. Many community groups provide free teacher trainings. Do your research to find out which groups could do a training at your school if your GSA or coalition doesn't want to take this on. Keep in mind that your principal or other administrator might also use funding as a barrier. Remind him/her that your GSA is prepared to do the training or find a community group that will conduct the training for free. Contact GSA Network if you need help. Be prepared with a back up plan in case your principal or other administrator still won't approve a teacher training. For example, ask if your GSA or coalition could do a brief presentation at a staff meeting.

VII. Summarize and confirm all actions and commitments.

VIII. Send thanks. Send a note thanking your principal or other administrator for taking the time to meet with you.

3. Follow Up.
Make sure to type up notes about what happened at your meeting. Include what actions were agreed upon between you and your principal or other administrator. Send your notes to your principal or other administrator to let him/her know that your group is serious and expects him/her to follow through.

4. Conduct your training!
See page 54 for a sample teacher training agenda. Be sure to provide handouts. See pages 55-56 for sample teacher training handouts.

5. Gather letters of support.
Whether you do a presentation at a staff meeting or have a teacher training, make sure to get teachers to write letters about how the training helped them. Provide copies of the letters to your administration so that they will have evidence of your effectiveness! These letters of support may also be effective for convincing your administration to hold more trainings or a longer training in the future.

Training Teachers Throughout Your District

Your school may tell you to get approval from your school board for a mandatory or even voluntary teacher training. If you must get approval from your school board, consider making it a district-wide campaign. Connect with other GSAs or student groups in your area and make a collective presentation to your school board.

1. Do your research.
Find out who on your school board is likely to approve the training, who is likely to oppose it, and who is undecided. Connect with the likely supporters and enlist their help in lobbying school board members who are unsure on the issue. Get parents, teachers, and students to call and send letters of support to the undecided school board members. Try to get copies of these letters and submit them to the board during your presentation to the board.

2. Schedule your presentation.
Get on the agenda for the school board and prepare for your presentation.

3. Give your presentation.
The agenda can look similar to the one for your principal, but expand each section so that it includes experiences and research from all schools in your district. Make sure your presentation fits within the time limits for a presentation to the school board. Get as many allies and constituents as possible at the meeting from all over the district. Especially try to gather parent support, as school board members are always interested in the views of parents in the district. There probably won't be time for everyone to speak, but you can have everyone stand during your presentation so that the school board can see how many people support your issue.

4. Conduct your training!
See page 54 for a sample teacher training agenda. Be sure to provide handouts. See pages 55-56 for sample teacher training handouts.

5. Gather letters of support.
After your training, be sure to get teachers to write letters about how the training helped them. Provide copies of the letters to your school board so that they will have evidence of your effectiveness! These letters of support may also be effective for convincing your district to hold more trainings or a longer training in the future.

VISUAL ACTIVISM

Incorporating visual media elements into your anti-slur campaign can be a powerful way to get attention, inspire thought, and generally increase the effectiveness of your work. Visual activism can be carried out in many ways, and can strengthen almost any type of school-based anti-slur effort. In this section of *Take It Back: A Manual for Fighting Slurs on Campus*, we will discuss a number of ideas for GSA-sponsored visual activism. We also encourage you to be creative and develop your own ideas!

No Approval Required!

Individual and Collective Activism
Your GSA or coalition can incorporate visual activism into your anti-slur campaign by encouraging visible participation on an individual level. Make arm bands, ribbons, stickers, buttons, or t-shirts and distribute them to club members and supporters who want to help take a stand against slurs at your school. Incorporate the slogans you've used on your posters, or include statements such as "I Don't Use Derogatory Language" or "~~slurs~~." Encourage everyone to wear them on the same day or week to get attention and provoke thought about hate language on your campus. Because it includes collective action on a personal level, this strategy can be particularly important for GSAs and coalitions that have trouble getting administrative approval for other kinds of visual activism.

Using Classrooms
Your GSA or coalition may also be able to display posters or flyers in classrooms without first getting administrative approval. Depending on how supportive your administration is, teachers may feel that they need to get approval to put up these posters; most schools, however, allow teachers to determine what goes on the walls of their classroom. Read the "Posters in Classrooms" information on page 31 for specific ideas about working with teachers to carry out visual activism.

Displays and Exhibits

One of the most effective ways to include a visual component in your anti-slur campaign is to sponsor a display or exhibit. Generally, this means either bringing a traveling exhibit such as *High Contrast* to your school, or working to design your own display. Note: you will probably need administrative approval for either of these strategies, so you should work that into your timeline.

High Contrast

High Contrast: Shades of Our Identities is a youth-produced interactive photo-narrative exhibit that travels to schools across California. Created by youth, *High Contrast* uses powerful black and white photographs, poetry, and prose to confront many forms of oppression and hate language. Schools that host the exhibit typically report a significant impact on school climate.

GSAs are often the primary force behind getting the exhibit in their schools, and club members work hard to ensure that the exhibit will be effectively utilized by teachers and students. Including an exhibit like *High Contrast* in your anti-slur campaign is a great way to drive home your message of acceptance. To find out more about bringing *High Contrast* to your school, visit www.gsanetwork.org/freezone or contact GSA Network.

Photo by Spencer Peterson

Designing Your own Display

You can design your own visual display or exhibit that addresses hate language and raises awareness about diversity at your school. One way to do this is to create a visual art and text exhibit similar to *High Contrast*, or set up an art show including contributions from youth in your school or community. Or, you can ask for access to one of your school's display cases in the hallway or the library, and put together a display that raises awareness about slurs on your campus and in your community. Consider finding a creative way to display the results of your school survey or other data you collected, such as quotes from youth at your school about their experiences with harassment.

An anti-slur visual display does not have to be confined to a display case! You can use other props to construct powerful messages about hate language and harassment. For example, you can use wood or PVC pipes to build a "closet." For the inside walls of the closet, write common slurs, hateful remarks, and statistics from your survey and other research. For the outside walls, write up quotes from social justice activists, information about your GSA or social justice coalition, and comments from students at your school who are committed to fighting slurs. Set up the closet in the quad or another common area (you'll probably want to have a club member staff the display).

Posters in Classrooms

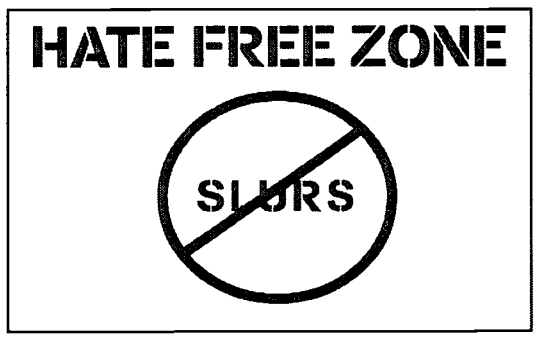
Liberation Ink

Liberation Ink is a series of 7 posters created by youth to make change in schools. These posters are distributed by GSA Network. High school and middle school GSAs in California can order up to 30 free posters, and they are available for a small price plus shipping to anyone else. They represent youth voices for justice, peace, and youth empowerment and speak out against hatred, harassment, and discrimination of all kinds. Some of the posters specifically address slurs. Use the posters in classrooms or in visual displays to raise awareness and confront derogatory language at your school. For more information on how to order the posters, and to see what they look like, visit: www.gsanetwork.org/freezone.

Poster by Jack Thompson and Andy Duran.

Hate Free Zone

One great way to get teachers involved in addressing slurs at your school is to include a Hate Free Zone component in your anti-slur campaign. You can do this by designing posters that teachers will display in their classrooms, and then asking the teachers to commit to addressing hate speech when it comes up in class. Your posters can include slogans such as "No Room for Slurs," "Hate Speech Not Tolerated in This Classroom," or "Hate Free Zone – No Slurs!" You can also design your own messages. It's a good idea to give participating teachers some concrete ideas for how to respond to slurs. For more ideas about how to implement a Hate Free Zone project, visit: www.gsanetwork.org/resources/hatefree.html.



Posters and Flyers in Common Areas

You can also make visual materials to put up in common areas at your school, such as hallways and the cafeteria. You'll probably want to make these posters and flyers easy to photocopy so you can reproduce them quickly and cheaply.

Don't give up if your hallway posters are ripped down or defaced! Here are some tips for what to do when this happens:

- Keep track of how many posters you put up and how many get torn down. This is concrete information to share with the administration and the school community in general that can help you illustrate the reality of intolerance in your school.
- Report incidents of vandalism to your school administration. If you can show that your posters are being targeted by graffiti or ripped down, your administrators might be more likely to let you use a display case.
- Put a surprise message under the posters. Many GSAs have found it effective and empowering to tape a message behind each poster for the people who might tear it down and for those who see it afterwards. Here are some ideas of messages you can use. Of course, you can come up with your own messages that are most appropriate to your community.
  - Hate is easy. Love takes courage. *(From the Los Gatos High School GSA.)*
  - You have just committed a hateful act.
  - There used to be a poster here that challenged derogatory language at our school. What are you doing to stop the hate?

Day of Silence

The Day of Silence is a national, youth-led protest event that is designed to raise awareness about homophobia and to call attention to language and silence as powerful tools for education and action. The event consists of a single day, usually in early April, where participants take a pledge of silence to recognize and protest the silence faced by oppressed people every day. In an effort to fight all oppressions, a number of clubs around the country have adapted Day of Silence activities to go beyond LGBT issues and focus on all kinds of bias and injustice.

Many GSAs and social justice coalitions have found that including visual elements in the Day of Silence makes the event more noticeable and successful. You can do this in a number of ways, including: asking participants to wear the same color on the Day of Silence; giving participants balloons to attach to their wrists or backpacks to help them stand out more; creating an exhibit, display, or posters to go along with the Day of Silence; and making stickers or ribbons for allies to show their support of the event, even if they're not participating. Visit www.dayofsilence.org for more information about participating in the Day of Silence.

ANTI-SLUR POLICIES

School Policies

One very easy and direct way to impact a lot of students is to ask for a change or clarification in your school's policies against name-calling, harassment, or other bias incidents directed against a person because of his or her sex, ethnic group identification, race, ancestry, national origin, religion, color, mental or physical disability, sexual orientation, or gender identity. First, make sure that all of the categories covered in state law are included in your school's policies. See page 56 for more infomation about the California school nondiscrimination law. Advocate for an anti-slur policy which includes your school's core values around fostering safety and respect for all students, as well as procedures for reporting incidents of name-calling, harassment, or discrimination. You should also ask that the policy be printed in your student handbook.

If your school already has a policy about slurs and harassment, you should evaluate your school's compliance with the policy, and if you find that it is not being enforced at your school, push them to implement it more effectively. For instance, if you find that your school's policy encourages staff to step in when slurs are said in hallways and classrooms, yet the faculty at your school has received no training around intervening in or responding to slurs, ask the administration to set up an anti-slur workshop for teachers. If you find that your school's policy focuses on punishing people who use slurs and doesn't provide any mechanism for preventing slurs, advocate for a change that would incorporate anti-bias education or counseling for people caught using slurs.

District Policies

By encouraging your school board to adopt an anti-slur policy, you can have an impact on every school in your district. A district-level policy can be especially important for schools where students haven't been able to get organized and in middle and elementary schools, where students may have a harder time advocating on their own behalf. You may also want focus on creating and implementing a district policy if your administration is reluctant to approve a school-based policy, or if you have difficulty getting support for school-based anti-slur projects.

One way to change school district policy is to get your school board to pass a resolution. A school board resolution is a statement that acknowledges a particular problem and agrees to address the problem in specific ways. For example, an anti-slur resolution might include statements about the widespread nature of slurs and harassment in schools, statistics from your student survey, and commitments to implement mandatory teacher trainings and distribute anti-slur posters to all schools in the district.

For ideas about how to make a presentation to your school board, see page 28 in the Teacher Education section of this chapter. You can also refer to GSA Network's publication, *Make it Real: A Student Organizing Manual for Implementing California's School Nondiscrimination Law*, for more ideas about how to hold your school or district accountable to implementing policies about harassment and discrimination. You can view this publication by visiting www.gsanetwork.org/ab537.

Avoid the Zero-Tolerance Policy Trap

When you advocate for a school or district policy on slurs and harassment, advocate for a fair, flexible, strong policy, but not a "zero tolerance" policy. Here's why:

1. **Zero tolerance discriminates.** Studies of "zero tolerance" policies have shown that they are applied in a discriminatory fashion, disproportionately being used to suspend or expel students of color. For instance African-American students in South Carolina schools (where "zero tolerance" policies are prevalent) represent just 42% of the student population, but 69% of those who are disciplined for minor infractions.

2. **Zero tolerance puts administrators in a bind.** They end up feeling that have no discretion to distinguish between serious and minor infractions, and sometimes administrators just won't understand the difference between the two. For instance, a "zero tolerance" policy on name-calling and slurs might treat a hostile student who harasses another student with the word "queer" in the same manner that it would treat a lesbian student who refers to herself and to other students as "queer."

3. **Zero tolerance doesn't mesh with civil rights values.** "Zero tolerance" is a fear-based, authoritarian, and unfair solution to a problem that requires active engagement, education, and promoting an environment of welcome and fairness for all. Any solution we look for should be consistent with our ultimate goal of fairness and respect for all.

4. **Zero tolerance doesn't get at the root of the problem.** A student who uses slurs against other students needs to learn why that's not okay. What will happen when a student who is suspended returns to school unchanged?

Instead of a "zero tolerance" policy, which focuses on punishment, advocate for a policy designed to prevent harassment. Promote a policy in which all slurs, harassment, and discrimination will be taken seriously; will be addressed immediately; will be recorded and tracked; will be met with a combination of discipline, counseling, and support; and will be countered by campus-wide measures to promote a positive climate, such as a special training or reminder on the intercom about the school's values and rules.

CHAPTER 3:
IMPLEMENTING YOUR CAMPAIGN

DEVELOPING A STRATEGY

When taking on any campaign, it helps to be organized and strategic. This section of *Take It Back* will help you document your resources, evaluate your power, and decide which strategy and specific tactics or actions are best to help your group reach its goal. If you plan on forming a coalition with other student groups on campus, fill out this section as a group so that everyone's input is included.

What is Your Goal?

Your goal is what you are fighting to accomplish. What will help you reduce or eliminate slurs on campus? Everything you do in your anti-slur campaign should work toward your goal. Then, when you begin considering specific actions, you can ask yourselves this question: "If we take this action, will it get us closer to our goal?"

GOAL: _____

What Do You Know About Your Problem?

Research helps you figure out the biggest slur-related problems at your school, which will inform how you choose the best strategy to carry out. See pages 18-22 for information about researching the problem with slurs at your school. After you have researched the problem (example: conducting a survey or tallying slurs), you should ask yourself, what did we learn about the problem? What is the root of the problem?

Research Phase:

___ Survey Students

___ Tally Slurs

___ Collect Student Stories/Experiences

___ Other Idea: _____

WHAT DID YOU FIND IN YOUR RESEARCH?

What are Your Strengths and Weaknesses?

It is important to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of your group or coalition. Be thorough and honest. Think about membership (number of people working on your campaign), access to cars, copy machines, and money. Think about speaking and writing abilities. List anything that may be helpful in your campaign and anything you don't have that you might need. Use the chart below to help organize your thoughts.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES

Who are Your Supporters and opponents?

Who will help you accomplish your goal? Think about who is on your side. Who else wants to hear all hateful slurs stop? Which teachers? Which students? What groups on campus? Which members of the broader community? Be as specific as possible.

Who might stand in your way as you try to accomplish your goal? Who will try to prevent your campaign from being successful? It isn't important to list every person you've ever heard use a slur - what matters in this category is who will actively organize against you.

SUPPORTERS	OPPONENTS

How Will You Accomplish Your Goal?

Before you choose your strategy, think about who you are trying to convince and what you are trying to change. Are you focusing on changing students' attitudes? Teachers' behavior? Think about what strategy and specific actions will best carry out your goal and help you change people's attitudes and behavior.

While brainstorming tactics ask yourselves how each tactic will help you meet your goal. Be creative! Remember to think about drawing on your strengths, engaging your allies, and minimizing the power of your opponents as you choose your strategy and plan your tactics. After you write down your tactics, make sure to fill out a timeline (see pages 45-47 for more information) identifying when all these steps will happen, who will do what, and by when.

Strategies:

___ Peer Education

___ Teacher Education

___ Visual Activism

___ Anti-Slur Policies

___ Other Idea: _____

Now that you have chosen your strategy, write down the specific tactics or actions you will take to carry out this strategy. For example, if you chose peer education, will you be doing classroom presentations or an after school teach-in? What would be the best classes to present in? Will the teach-in be on campus or off campus?

SPECIFIC TACTICS

How Will You Get Approval?

If you've chosen a tactic that requires approval from your administration in order to implement, you will need to come up with the best way to gain this approval. Who has the power to approve your project? Do you need to get approval from your ASB? Your principal? Your school board? Whoever it is, that person is your target. That is the person you will be strategizing about, trying to convince him/her to support your campaign. After you figure out who your target is, go back to the specific tactics section and fill in anything you will need to do to convince your target to approve your project. You will need to convince your target before you can carry out your tactics.

On the next page, you will find tips for getting approval from your administration.

Target:_____

TIP: If your target appears to be a group of people (example: School Board/ Student Governing Body) concentrate your efforts on a particular person or two people rather than the whole group. Determine who in the group is undecided about letting you carry out your campaign and focus your efforts on them. Their votes of approval will make all the difference.

GETTING APPROVAL FROM YOUR ADMINISTRATION

If you need to get approval from your administration to do any part of your campaign, here are some tips for approaching and working with administrators at your school. Combine these tips with what you know about your school and come up with your own ideas for working with your administration.

1. Write a letter to your principal.
Write a letter to give to your principal or other administrator who handles club activities. Your letter should tell them what you are doing, why you are doing it, and ask for their approval and/or support. Include a copy of any materials you think they might like to see. Be sure to include information about The California Student Safety and Violence Prevention Act of 2000 and the rights of all students to attend school in a safe environment free from harassment. See page 56 for a handout you can provide for your principal. For more information about this law and the laws regarding parental permission for tolerance education, visit www.gsanetwork.org/legalFAQs.html. Don't ask just for approval from your principal, but try to get his or her support on this important issue.

2. Request a meeting with your administration.
Ask for a time to meet with your principal or other administrator and present your anti-slur campaign plans. Request the meeting 1-2 weeks in advance, and confirm the meeting at least a day ahead of time.

3. Find teacher and staff allies.
Support from teachers and staff is not only encouraging, but they can also advocate for your ideas in staff meetings when these issues are brought up!

4. Plan out your meeting.
Figure out who will attend a meeting with your administration. Plan out what you will say to present your project. Be prepared to answer questions about how you will do it and why you think it's important. See page 27 for a sample meeting agenda.

5. Decide what would be realistic to ask your administration to approve.
Be prepared to offer compromises – know what you will and won't give up. Approach your administration with respect and be positive. If you advance negatively, the administration will more likely be defensive and less likely to hear what you have to say. Don't assume the administration will disapprove of your idea without listening to you first. If you do, you may jeopardize your chances of getting it approved by what you say and how you say it, as if you're already defeated.

6. Be knowledgeable about your rights.
Be ready to answer any questions about the law that your administration may ask. The more you know about your issue, the more likely they will be to take you seriously. AB 537 is the California Student Safety and Violence Prevention Act of 2000, which protects students from harassment and discrimination on the basis of actual or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity. Visit www.gsanetwork/ab537 for more information. For information about your free speech rights at school, visit: www.aclunc.org/students/guide.

7. Don't go alone.
Go to your meeting with other students or faculty allies. Bringing several people to your meeting can help increase accountability, increase the power you have in the meeting, and make you feel more comfortable.

COALITION BUILDING

Building a coalition is hard work, but coalitions are a powerful tool. They bring groups together around a united goal. When forming your coalition think about what other groups on campus may experience slurs and would be interested in stopping them and ask them to join your coalition. Here are some helpful guidelines.

Coalition: an "organization of organizations" united around a common issue and clear goal(s).

Guidelines for Successful Coalitions

1. Choose a method.
Decide as a group what the method for your anti-slur campaign will be. Everyone should agree as to what will be the most effective way to create change on your campus.

2. Understand and respect each group's self-interest.
There must be a balance between the goals and needs of the coalition and of the individual organizations.

3. Respect each group's internal process.
It is important to understand and respect the differences among groups. These differences are often apparent in processes or chains of command for decision-making. Make a commitment to learning about the unique values, histories, interests, structures, and agendas of the other groups in your coalition.

4. Agree to disagree.
You must be able to agree on your goals and strategies, but all of the groups in the coalition may not agree about every issue you discuss.

5. Structure decision-making carefully.
The decision-making process of your coalition should allow for the most group input. Think about whether or not representatives of member organizations need to go back to their respective groups for input or if you should vote over email to allow for the most participation in making decisions.

6. Distribute credit fairly.
Recognize that contributions vary. Appreciate different contributions. Each organization will have something different to offer. Each contribution is important, so be sure to acknowledge them all, whether they be volunteers, meeting space, funding, copying, publicity, leafleting, passing resolutions, or other resources.

7. Give and take.
It is important to build on existing relationships and connections with other organizations. Don't just ask for or expect support; be prepared to give it.

8. Develop a common strategy.
The strength of a coalition is in its unity. Work together with other organizations to develop a strategy that makes sense for everyone. The tactics you choose should be ones that all the organizations can endorse. If not, the tactics should be carried out by individual organizations independent of the coalition.

9. Be strategic.
Coalition building requires a good strategy in and of itself. Which organizations you ask, who asks them, and in which order to ask them are all questions to figure out.

10. Send the same representative to each coalition meeting.
This helps ensure consistency and makes meetings run more smoothly.

11. Formalize your coalition.
It is best to make explicit agreements. Make sure everyone understands what their responsibilities and rights are. Being clear can help prevent conflicts.

12. Name your coalition.
This can help to unify your coalition and lets others know what your purpose is.

13. Present a united front.
When it is time to implement your strategy, present your information to your target as a coalition and make sure to name all the key groups involved. This will help prove to your target that many people on your campus care about what you are trying to do.

DEVELOPING A TIMELINE

When planning a campaign as a GSA or coalition, it is important to create a timeline. Timelines help you keep track of what needs to be done, who is doing it, and when it will be done. Timelines are great documents for ensuring that all of your bases are covered and no details get lost along the way. This section of *Take It Back* takes you step by step through creating a timeline specific for your anti-slur campaign. You will also find a chart that your club may find useful when developing a timeline.

Steps for creating a Timeline

1. Look at the big picture.
One you've chosen your method for reducing slurs on campus, think about how much work and involvement is necessary to accomplish your goal. For example, a poster campaign may not take as long to implement as a teacher training. If you choose more than one campaign strategy, you will need a separate timeline for each. If you plan to do research (ex: a student survey), build this into your timeline as well.

2. Examine your school environment.
Assess the likelihood of support from your school's administration. Ask yourselves how long would it take to get approval? Will you have to go to your school board? If so, they may meet only once or twice a month and that should factor into your timeline.

3. Examine your resources.
List the tasks that need to be done to secure the resources necessary for your campaign. Build these tasks into the beginning of your timeline.

4. Make a detailed list.
List all the steps that need to be accomplished in order to carry out your campaign. Be specific and detailed.

People Power:

Examine the resources of your group. How many members do you have? Are you going to form a coalition with other groups? Building a coalition takes time and careful planning (see pages 43-44). Once you answer these questions list the names of persons and groups (or potential people) you can count on to work on the campaign.

Fundraising:

Is money required to carry out your goal? Will you need to fundraise or get donations? If it is necessary to raise money for your campaign, consider establishing a fundraising subcommittee in your coalition or GSA be sure to build the fundraising process into your timeline.

Research:

Do you need to do research or collect data? Will you need to present this information to win key support before your plans can go forward? What is the most effective way of presenting your research? Make sure your timeline takes into account the research elements of your anti-slur campaign.

5. Assign duties.
Match people and groups to tasks. Every task listed must be matched with a person or group responsible for carrying it out.

6. Set your dates.
Designate dates by when each task must be completed. At this point your timeline actually begins to take shape. Assign every task a "complete by" date that is realistic and that enables your process to move forward.

7. Distribute your timeline.
Give a copy of your timeline to everyone involved and communicate the importance of sticking to it to insure the success of your project.

8. Carry out your project according to the timeline.
Try to stick to your timeline as much as possible, but if any step in your timeline is delayed, readjust the rest of the timeline accordingly.

9. Celebrate all your accomplishments along the way!
Campaign work is rewarding but hard. Make sure everyone remembers how important your work is. Take the time to recognize everyone's contributions.

TIPS FOR CREATING A TIMELINE

1. Designate several dates throughout the timeline that are check-in" dates. On these dates, everyone who is responsible for accomplishing certain tasks reports in on their progress. This way, if unforeseen complications arise, they can be dealt with in a timely manner and your project can move ahead as scheduled.

2. When creating a timeline, working backwards from the final target date can be the most effective way to plan. For instance, if you are planning to hold a teacher training on March 12th and you estimate that publicity needs to begin a month ahead of time, this helps you realize that you'll need to get administrative approval by February 12th.

ANTI-SLUR CAMPAIGN TIMELINE

TASK:	WHO WILL DO IT:	COMPLETE BY:

SAMPLE MATERIALS

Student Survey

Your responses to this survey will be kept confidential

Grade: ❑ 6 ❑ 7 ❑ 8 ❑ 9 ❑ 10 ❑ 11 ❑ 12

Gender: ❑ Male ❑ Female

Ethnicity:

❑ African American ❑ Latino/a ❑ Native American ❑ Asian/Pacific Islander American
❑ Caucasian ❑ Mixed ❑ Other: _____

1. How often do you hear slurs or name-calling at school directed at a specific person?

Based on:

		several times a day	once a day	once a week	once a month or less	never
a.	Race or ethnicity	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
b.	Gender	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
c.	Sexual orientation (lesbian, gay, bisexual, or straight)	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
d.	Body size	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
e.	Immigrant status	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
f.	Religion	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
g.	Physical or mental disability	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
h.	Other: _____	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑

2. How often do you hear slurs at school not specifically directed at anyone (using derogatory words in conversation like "ghetto" or "that's so gay")?

Based on:

		several times a day	once a day	once a week	once a month or less	never
a.	Race or ethnicity	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
b.	Gender	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
c.	Sexual orientation (lesbian, gay, bisexual, or straight)	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
d.	Body size	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
e.	Immigrant status	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
f.	Religion	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
g.	Physical or mental disability	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
h.	Other: _____	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑

3. When you hear slurs or name-calling, teachers or staff step in:

❑ always ❑ often ❑ sometimes ❑ occasionally ❑ never

4. When you hear slurs or name-calling, other students step in:

❑ always ❑ often ❑ sometimes ❑ occasionally ❑ never

5. When you hear slurs or name-calling, you step in:

❑ always ❑ often ❑ sometimes ❑ occasionally ❑ never

Comments about slurs and name-calling at your school:

_____

_____

This survey was developed by GSA Network.

Sample Peer Education Workshop Agenda

(This agenda was developed by GSA Network and adapted from materials by Intergroup Clearinghouse, and School of Unity and Liberation.)

I. Introductions and ground rules (5 minutes)

A. Introduce workshop and presenters.

B. Suggest ground rules: 1) respect everyone in the room, 2) agree to disagree, 3) keep everyone's comments confidential, 4) be honest, 5) step forward (if you aren't participating as much) or step back (if you are dominating the discussion), 6) don't interrupt, 7) allow people the right to pass on any question, 8) make no assumptions or generalizations

II. Power and Language (10 minutes)

A. Definitions (5 minutes)

1. What is power?
    a. Brainstorm what people think about when they hear the word "power" and definitions of "power."
    b. In this context we are talking about power over others
2. Provide a working definition of power: *control over people and circumstances*.

B. Power chart (5 minutes)

1. Hand out and go over the power chart. Have people think about identities that apply to them, and ask if anyone wants to share their thoughts.
2. Ask the group to brainstorm some of the "isms" that keep power relationships in place and write these up on the board – racism, sexism, heterosexism/homophobia, ageism, ableism, etc.
3. Talk about language as one of the ways we maintain power over others. Ask the audience how slurs can be hurtful to others or give certain people/groups power over other people/groups. Discuss how slurs are a common way that systems of power are acted out, and that slurs are tools of oppression.

TIP: Review pages 9-11 before you present this section.

III. Slur Brainstorm (10 min)

Using the list of "isms," brainstorm a list of slurs that students hear and use. Ask:

A. Where did you first hear these terms?

B. What groups are being put down?

C. Why does name-calling happen?

IV. Personal stories (15 min)

A. Have a panel of one or more students from your group or coalition talk briefly (3-5 minutes) about their experiences with name-calling, slurs, and harassment. Each panelist should describe how it made them feel, what they did about it and why, and what they hope everyone in the class will learn from the presentation and the panel. (This panel should be prepared ahead of time).

B. Questions and answers.

TIP: If you don't have panelists, write up some scenarios about name-calling, slurs, and harssment. Break the audience into groups, give each group a scenario, and have each group figure out how to respond to the scenario. Then bring every one back into a large groups to report back about what they came up with.

V. What you can do to fight slurs (5 minutes)

Go over the tips and ideas on the handout.

Power Chart

POWER	NON-POWER
Adults	Young/Elderly People
White People	People of Color
Men	Women/Intersex People
Gender-Conforming People	Gender-Nonconforming/ Transgender People
Rich/Middle Class People	Poor/Working Class People
People Born in the U.S.	Recent Immigrants
Christians	Non-Christians
Heterosexuals	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Queer, Questioning (LGBQQ) People
Able-Bodied People	People With Disabilities (mental, physical, and/or hidden)

5 Things You Can Do to Stop Slurs

1. Don't use slurs. If someone calls you out when you use derogatory terms, try to learn from the experience. Rather than getting defensive, respect that they are trying to make your school safe for everyone.

2. Speak up when you hear slurs being used. Explain why hate language is offensive and how it perpetuates the oppression of historically targeted communities.

3. Get involved with an anti-slur campaign at your school. Attend meetings of the GSA or other social justice club/coalition and use activism to fight hate language.

4. Wear buttons or stickers that carry messages of tolerance and respect.

5. Encourage teachers, school staff, and other students to respond when slurs are used in classrooms and hallways.

This handout was developed by GSA Network.

Sample Teacher Training Workshop Agenda

(This agenda was developed by GSA Network.)

I. Introduction

A. Welcome the audience and thank them for participating.

B. Go over the purpose of the workshop. You might say something like: "This workshop is designed to address the issue of verbal harassment in our school. We recognize that teachers play a crucial role in the learning environment and can be valuable allies in the effort to reduce slurs and make our school a safe environment for all students."

C. Introduce presenters

D. Go over ground rules

II. Presentation of Statistics

A. If your GSA or coalition conducted a school survey, highlight some of your results.

B. You may also present some general statistics about the prevalence and effect of slurs in schools. See pages 12-13 for more information.

III. Student Stories

Have a panel of one or more students from your GSA or coalition talk briefly (3-5 minutes each) about their experiences with name-calling, slurs, and harassment. Try to get panelists who can talk about experiences with different kinds of slurs. (This panel should be prepared ahead of time).

TIP: If you don't have panelists, write up some scenarios about name-calling, slurs, and harssment. Break the audience into groups, give each group a scenario, and have each group figure out how to respond to the scenario. Then bring everyone back into a large group to report back about what they came up with.

IV. Intervening

A. Discussion

1. Do you intervene when slurs happen in your classroom? What about when you hear slurs in common areas, such as the hallway or lunchroom?
2. If you do intervene, why do you think it is important to do so?
3. What are the challenges to intervening?

B. Tips for Intervening

1. Set a standard. Create an anti-slur ground rule in your classroom, and communicate this clearly to students. It may be helpful to spend some time talking about why this rule is important to you and to all students. Having a clear anti-slur standard in your class will proactively prevent slurs and make it easier to respond to derogatory language when it happens. Consider posting a "No room for slurs" or similar sign in your classroom.
2. If you hear slurs during a particular class period, spend a couple of minutes reviewing your anti-slur ground rule.
3. Think about having a one-on-one conversation after class with the person who used the slur. It's usually more effective to reach people on this level than by putting them on the spot in front of others.
4. If the slur was directed against a particular student in the class, check in with the person who was targeted. Make sure you let them know that you are aware of what happened, that you want to respond effectively, and that if they feel like they are experiencing verbal harassment they always have the option of telling you and/or filing a formal complaint.
5. If you notice slurs happening frequently, set aside some time for a class discussion about what slurs mean and how they are harmful. If a student group at your school, such as the GSA club, social justice coalition, or peer counseling program offers peer education training about slurs, invite them to conduct one for your class.

III. The Law

A. California law protects all students and employees at public schools from harassment and discrimination on the basis of sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, ethnic group identification, race, ancestry, national origin, religion, color, and mental or physical disability.

B. Schools have an obligation to protect all students from all kinds of harassment including slurs and other verbal harassment.

C. Students and school staff have the right to report harassment. Hand out info about filing a complaint.

IV. Q & A

Statistics About Slurs and Harassment

1 in 5 high school students reported that they have missed school because of the fear of being bullied, harassed, or in a fight.

Source: Woodland Community Oriented Policing Services Grant Committee, 2001

Nationally, 93% of teens hear other kids at school or in their neighborhood use words like "fag," "homo," "dyke," "queer," or "gay" at least once in a while, with 51% hearing them everyday.

Source: National Mental Health Association "What Does Gay Mean?" Teen Survey, 2002

63.4% of high school students reported hearing racial slurs from other students in the last 30 days.

Source: Safe School Survey, Fremont Unified School District, 2001

67.2% of high school students and 67.7% of junior high school students reported hearing slurs based on physical size from other students in the last 30 days.

Source: Safe School Survey, Fremont Unified School District, 2001

Only 25% of students report that teachers intervene to stop verbal or physical harassment of any kind, whereas 71% of teachers believe they always intervene.

Source: No Bullying Program: Preventing Bully/Victim Violence At School; Lajoie, et al., 1997, xi.

5 Things Teachers Can Do to Stop Slurs

1. Set a standard. Create an anti-slur ground rule in your classroom, and communicate this clearly to students. It may be helpful to spend some time talking about why this rule is important to you and to all students. Having a clear standard in your class will proactively prevent slurs and make it easier to respond to derogatory language when it happens. Consider posting a "No room for slurs" or similar sign in your classroom.
2. If you hear slurs during a particular class period, spend a couple of minutes reviewing your anti-slur ground rule.
3. Think about having a one-on-one conversation after class with the person who used the slur. It's usually more effective to reach people on this level than by putting them on the spot in front of others.
4. If the slur was directed against a particular student in the class, check in with the person who was targeted. Make sure you let them know that you are aware of what happened, that you want to respond effectively, and that if they feel like they are experiencing verbal harassment they always have the option of telling you and/or filing a formal complaint.
5. If you notice slurs happening frequently, set aside some time for a class discussion school, such as the GSA club, social justice coalition, or peer counseling program offers peer education training about slurs, invite them to conduct one for your class.

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California's School Nondiscrimination Law

What is the California Student Safety and Violence Prevention Act of 2000?

The California Student Safety and Violence Prevention Act of 2000 (also known as AB 537) changed California's Education Code by adding actual or perceived sexual orientation and gender to the existing nondiscrimination policy. The state defines "gender" as "a person's actual sex or perceived sex and includes a person's perceived identity, appearance or behavior, whether or not that identity, appearance, or behavior is different from that traditionally associated with a person's sex at birth." The nondiscrimination policy also prohibits harassment and discrimination on the basis of sex, ethnic group identification, race, ancestry, national origin, religion, color, or mental or physical disability.

This law protects students and school employees against discrimination and harassment at all California public schools and any school receiving state funding except religious schools. Harassment is defined as "conduct based on protected status that is severe or pervasive, which unreasonably disrupts an individual's educational or work environment or that creates a hostile educational or work environment." The protections cover any program or activity in a school, including extracurricular activities and student clubs.

How do you file a complaint of harassment or discrimination?

If a student or school employee has been harassed or discriminated against, file a complaint with the school. The process for filing a complaint at schools can vary. Ask the principal or vice principal who handles complaints of harassment. It is the same process as filing a sexual harassment complaint.

Document everything. The person making the complaint should write down the key details of the incident such as who, what, when, where, and who witnessed it. Include details from meetings with administrators. Keep a copy of all reports filed and confirmation that they were received.

What are schools and school districts obligated to do?

Schools must repond swiftly as authorized in the school's complaint process and procedures. If the school does not adequately address the problem, the person filing the complaint may go to the district superintendent's office to file a complaint with the district. The school district must follow the California "Uniform Complaint Procedures," which outline that, to be compliant with the law, school districts are obligated to:

- Designate a staff member who is knowledgeable about the law to be responsible for receiving and investigating complaints .
- Every year, notify parents, employees, and students of the district complaint procedures, including the right to appeal the school district's decision to the California Department of Education.
- Protect complainants from retaliation.
- Ensure confidentiality of the parties and the facts related to the case.
- Accept complaints from any youth, adult, public agency, or organization.
- Resolve the complaint through mediation or investigation and complete a written report within 60 days of receipt of the complaint.
- Advise the complainant of their right to appeal to the California Department of Education within 15 days of receipt of the written report.

What is the California Department of Education obligated to do?

As the authority over public schools, the California Department of Education (CDE) is responsible for making sure that schools follow this nondiscrimination law. If your school district fails to adequately resolve your complaint, the CDE is obligated to do the following:

- If your school district does not act within 60 days of receiving your complaint or if you appeal the school district's decision, the CDE is obligated to complete an investigation within 60 days, and make a decision about whether the school district has lived up to its responsibilities and whether it needs to do anything else.
- Require schools to take steps to improve problems raised through investigation of complaints.
- Request a report of the schools' actions and keep a file of every written complaint received.

To learn more about how you can implement and enforce this law, visit www.gsanetwork.org/ab537.

This handout was developed by GSA Network.

CONTACT US

Gay-Straight Alliance Network

www.gsanetwork.org

www.ab537.org

Statewide Office:

160 14th Street
San Francisco, CA 94103
ph: 415.552.4229
f: 415.552.4729

Regional Office:

985 N. Van Ness
Fresno, CA 93728
ph: 559.442.4777
f: 559.442.4734

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